A Book of Children's Verse

"Miss Humpety Comes to Tea"

and Other Poems by

Grace Noll Crowell

Author of "White Fire
and
"Silver in the Sun"

1938 Mrs. Grace Noll Crowell, Dallas. Three sons including a railway executive, an artist-writer, an English professor. Distinguished as poet laureate of Texas. Still writing verse

To Miss Nellie Fay -

This little book is the gift of your dear "Grandpa Fox" and the author is sending Miss Humpety to live with you, and she has tucked her love into the market basket and she hopes you find it.

Affectionately

Grace Noll Crowell.

Dallas. Texas
May 15. 1929.

MISS HUMPETY COMES TO TEA

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and Other Poems

BY

GRACE NOLL CROWELL

ILLUSTRATIONS BY

DOROTHY HEARON

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TO ALL CHILDREN

WHO LOVE

HAPPY, SHINING THINGS,

THIS BOOK IS

AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Acknowledgment is due the following magazines for permission to reprint poems which first appeared in their pages: *The Delineator, Century, The Youth's Companion, The Christian Herald, The Christian Endeavor World,* and *The Youth's Comrade.*

Every child I know
Loves the fire's glow,
And the gleam of light
Through the dark at night.
Children know that wings
Are such shining things.
Many things each day
I think shine that way.
Come walk a while with me—
Let's see what we can see.

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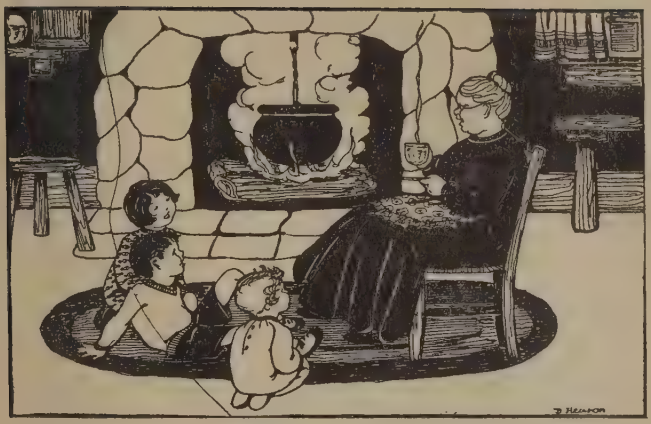


MISS HUMPETY COMES TO TEA

THE dogs are barking. There's somebody coming!
Children, run to the window and see—
Is it the rag-man, or is it the tag-man,
Or is it Miss Humpety coming to tea?

O, it's Miss Humpety! Look at her, children—
A little round dumpety figure of fun:
Her cheeks are like apples, her lips are like cherries,
Her hair done up tight like a bakery bun.

Stir up the fire, and put on the kettle—
We'll let the hard-knuckled rain beat at the door,
Sweep off the hearthstone, and gather around her,
She'll tell the same stories she's told us before.

Forget it is raining, forget it is winter,
Forget that the flour be scarce in the bin;
Look at Miss Humpety, purple with laughter,
Who once was a rack-o-bones, she was so thin!

But she laughed, and she laughed, and she kept
right on laughing.
Children, let's laugh till our ribs rock with glee.
It's better than rhubarb—it's better than quinine
To have dear Miss Humpety coming to tea.

MISS HUMPETY GOES SHOPPING

O, MOTHER, Miss Humpety's come to go shopping!
Please let us go with her, O, mother, please do!
She's out at the gate with her wickery basket,
She's waiting to see if we cannot go too.

O, goody! O, goody! we're going, we're going!
And never, and never will there be such fun;
She'll buy us a stick of striped peppermint candy,
A round ringy doughnut, a fluffy, fat bun.

O, dear, dear Miss Humpety, can't you walk faster?
We'll carry your basket, O, please don't sit down.
Your story is funny, but laugh while you're walking,
Unless we keep going we'll never reach town.

But now we are there, and the jolly fat grocer
Is wrapping bologna, and crackers, and cheese;
Miss Humpety's telling her funniest story,
The grocer-boy's laughing and slapping his knees.

And out of the jar comes the peppermint candy,
The bun and the doughnut are popped in the sack;
The pennies come out of Miss Humpety's pocket,
And one of them rolls, and gets lost in a crack.

We walk down the street, and we look in the windows,
At long linky sausages, round loaves of bread,
And into the store where they sell pretty ribbons
Miss Humpety goes for a spool of white thread.

"Now, children," she says, "we have spent our last penny,"
It's time to turn homeward, the sun is 'most down,"
Says she, "But we're rich, and we scarcely can carry
All the beautiful things that we bought in the town.

"There's satins and velvets and ribbons and laces,
And slippers of silver to dance in the breeze—"
But all we could see when we looked in the basket,
Was thread and bologna and crackers and cheese.

MISS HUMPETY ENTERTAINS

Miss Humpety lives in a tumble-down cottage
Across the green meadow, and down through the wood,
And mother has said we may pay her a visit
Today, if we children work well, and are good.

'Twill be a surprise to her—Come on, O, come on!
The sun on the meadow is yellow as gold,
It's glittering bright on Miss Humpety's windows,
You never would dream that her house is so old.

It sags in the back like a dripping-wet rooster;
You can reach to the eaves if you stand on your
toes,
But the front of it looks like a smiling old lady:
Two windows for eyes, and a door for her nose.

O, there is Miss Humpety now, and she sees us!
She's waving her apron, she's out at the gate—
She's coming to meet us a-shaking with laughter,
Whatever her story she scarcely can wait.

"Now who would believe it! Why, sure 'tis the
children!
Come right in, my darlin's, 'tis glad now I be,
One egg in the cupboard—enough for the batter,
And sassafras roots for a fine cup of tea.

And in through the little low doorway she leads
us,
"There's only one chair," says she, "what's to be
done?"
But we sit on the floor and we circle around her,
She tells us a story, and O, it is fun!

Miss Humpety's laughter is like the red measles:
You catch it—why, often we've laughed till we
cried.
She looks like a feather bed tied in the middle.
We never can tell where her apron strings hide.

"And now we'll have supper. I'll bring out the dishes,"
Says she, "Will you have them of silver or gold?"
But the cups that she brings us are cracked down the middle,
And the handles are gone from them—they are so old.

And never the batter-bread rose for a minute!
"I hadn't the soda," Miss Humpety said.
"But never mind, children, we'll get on without it,
Your tea will taste better without any bread."

THE BAKERY SHOP

BENEATH a broad elm on an old crooked street
Stands a queer little, quaint little, bakery shop,
Where a child with a penny can buy him a bun,
A honey-clear cake or a red lolly-pop.

And over the door hangs a curious bell
That jingles and jangles when one steps within,
And a little round apple-cheeked woman will come
Called forth from somewhere by its clamor and din.

There one may select through a counter that shines,
A cake with a frosting all ambered with beads,
Or one with red cinnamon hearts on its top,
Or one that is sprinkled with caraway seeds.

How many small hands holding coppery coins
Have startled the clapper of that little bell—
How many stubbed shoes have passed over the sill—
There's never a soul in the world who can tell.

But often I see them when twilight has come:
They walk, and they run, and they hippity-hop;
And the child that I was is the gladdest child there,
With a penny to spend at the bakery shop.

CHILDREN IN THE PARK

Swift as the wind,
Beautiful as dreaming:
Light, light,
As poppies in the wheat.
Darting through the sunshine,
Dipping through the shadows,
Every little runner
Has arrows on his feet.

Tiny girls in white
Are open lilies blowing:
One, two,
Count them as they pass.
Those in pink are rosebuds,
Those in blue are water flags,
Those in green are apple leaves
Whirling on the grass.

Small sturdy boys
Are timothy and clover:
Sweet, sweet,
As meadows are at dark.
O, they are so beautiful
In the blowing weather,
Happy, star-eyed children,
Playing in the park.

THE PASTURE BARS

A DEAR little girl that I used to know
Would often sit on the pasture bars
In the early dark of a summer night
To search the sky for the first white stars.

O, sweet was the scent of the dewy grass,
And sweet were the sounds that the warm night
brought,
But there was nothing so lovely, quite,
As those first white stars—the small girl thought.

And she wondered if they were peopled worlds:
If somewhere there was a little girl
Who sat upon starry pasture bars
Watching the round earth whirl and whirl.

O, how she wished she might signal her!
Could wave—or could lift a hand so high
That the little star-girl would see and give
An answering wave from the spangled sky.

The girl that I knew is grown-up now,
But she never can think of pasture bars
Without recalling the summer nights
She watched for that answer from the stars.

KITES

Climbing their silvery cords to the sky
The bright kites go.
Windy the hill where bare brown feet
Run to and fro.
Gaily the winged ships sail and sail,
Riding the gale.

Windy the hills of a thousand springs
In a thousand lands.
Boys forever with high bright kites
Tugging their hands—
Tugging the hearts of those who know
How swift years go.

Upward, skyward, the strings unreel,
Silvered with sun.
Over the brilliant blowing grass
The young boys run—
Watching—watching that thing of light:
A flying kite.

THE TORTOISE

THE venturesome tortoise is crossing the road,
He carries the queerest, the funniest load,
He ambles along, and never a van
Could carry the load that this small tortoise can.
His roof and his awnings he stacks in his pack,
He carries his bungalow high on his back;
He waddles along and wherever he goes
He carries his Sunday and everyday clothes.
With all of the wide world to walk in, he must
Go poking across through the wheel-flurried dust.
O, look at him there with that bunglesome load!
How can he expect to get over the road?

RED BALLOONS

When I was a very little girl
And the circus came to town,
I would put on my shoes with their patent tips,
And my flowered dimity gown;
And out to the lot with its billowing tent—
My small coins clasped in my hand,

My spirit would march with plumes, and my feet
To the tune of a circus band.

And there in all the glitter and shine
Of those glorious afternoons—
Swaying high on their slender threads
Were clustered the toy balloons:
Purple and scarlet and yellow globes
Tangled with wind and sun,
And more than anything in the world—
I wanted the reddest one!

I ached with the want, but I counted the cost;
Some hidden blood of the past
Cautioned me never to spend my coins
For a thing that would not last.
I wish I had stopped my ears and run
As fast as I could—and there—
Had bought a balloon—and had let it burst—
A scarlet flash on the air.

THE SCISSORS GRINDER

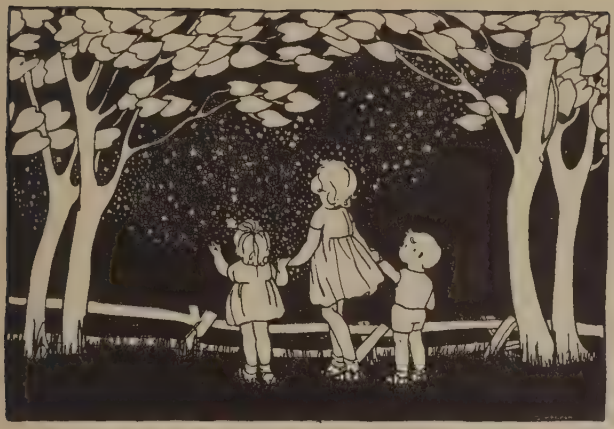
THE scissors grinder comes down our street,
His whistle is plaintive and shrill and sweet:
"Twee—ee—ee—eet,"
And his call comes echoing clear and true:
"Let me sharpen your scissors and knives for you,"
"Twee—ee—ee—eet."

When we hear his whistle we run to find
The things that we have that are ready to grind.
"Twee—ee—ee—eet,"
Hear him come whistling down the street!
And mother will give us a knife or two,
"Tell him to do a good job, won't you?"
"Twee—ee—ee—eet."

The scissors grinder will smile and say:
"Something for me to sharpen today?
Well, Well," and the wheel begins,
Burr—rr as it wheels and spins,
"What makes the sparks?" we ask, and he
Never answers at all, he's so busy, you see.
Burr—rr—rr—rr.

He runs his fingers along—just so—
To see if the edge is sharp, and O,
Surely he'll cut his finger—zip—
But the wheel goes flying again, zip, zip—
"Almost enough, not quite—you see—
Not quite as sharp as it ought to be."
Zip—zip—zip—zip.

"There, tell your mother they couldn't be
Smoother or sharper as I can see.
A quarter and dime, that's right. Goodday,"
And he shoulders his wheel and he walks away.
His call goes echoing down the street,
And his whistle is plaintive and shrill and sweet:
"Twee—ee—ee—eet."



THE BOUQUET

To me the stars are God's great white bouquet
Of silver dusk-flowers, grasped within His hand,
And offered upward to the heavenly land.

And all the angels, when they see it there:
The lovely, silver, lily-fragrant thing—
Run with delight to breathe His offering.

THE LADIES

THE loveliest ladies I ever have seen
Were painted on grandmother's old clock's face:
Their dresses were beautiful, wonderful things
Of flutings and ruffles and ribbons and lace.

The loveliest ladies, all silver and white,
With lavender velvet in quaint little loops;
The slippers they wore were the tiniest things,
Their skirts were billowed with bustles and hoops.

They were gathering flowers at evening time
From the sweet-briar hedge by the old garden walk,
And often I listened—and almost caught
Their lady-like laughter, their faint, sweet talk.

And always beside them—a dear little girl
Stood holding a basket half filled with bright flowers
And sometimes I fancied I saw her look
Quite wistfully up at the clock's slow hours.

O, the ladies were lovely, the garden was sweet,
And the dear little girl was a picture to see,
But I wished many times that her long skirts were
short,
And that she could jump over the hedge to me.

HE KNEW

"I KNOW how the pretty bright stars are made,"
A dear little child once said,
As he watched their slow coming-out one by one
From his own tiny snow-white bed.

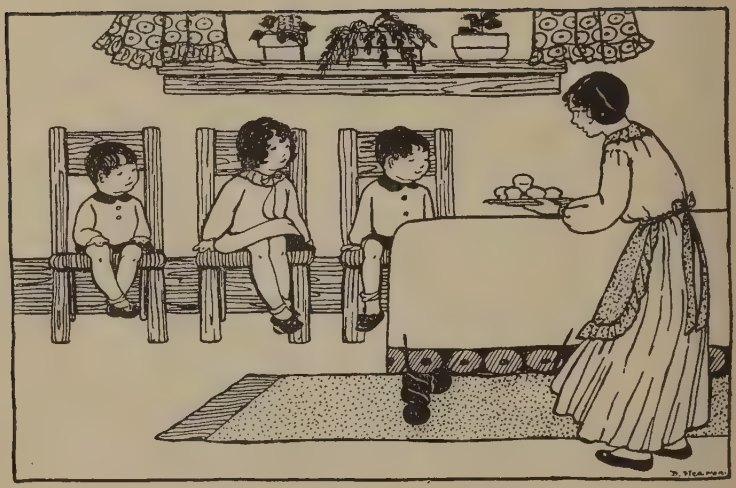
"I wish you would tell me the secret, dear,"
I asked, and he made reply:
"Why, God just puts fire in a pepper box
And shakes it all over the sky."

PRAYERS

PETERKIN and Bobbie go
Up the stairs to bed,
Then they kneel to say their prayers,
And once Bobbie said:

"Peterkin, please let me say
My prayers first tonight.
If we both talk—how can God
Listen to us right?

I will pray, and then you pray,
And He can hear each word."
So Peterkin let Bobbie pray,
And I am sure God heard.



THE STORY BOOK HOUSE

I NEVER have been to the Story Book house
That stands in the mist at the edge of the wood,
But I think that the loveliest mother lives there,
And that all of her children are shiningly good.

I think that they never have quarreled in their lives,
These children who live in the Story Book house,
And when there are callers, that all of them sit
In their splint-bottom rockers as still as a mouse.

I am sure that the starched gingham dresses are clean,
And the little boy's blouses are glittery white,
And never a smudgy hand takes up a spoon
When the porridge is steaming in blue bowls at night.

I think that each morning they play hide and seek
In the sunlight that shimmers through blossoming trees,
But when there are errands that have to be run
They fly to them buzzingly busy as bees.

O, the Story Book house is a beautiful place,
Its shutters are green, and its curtains are gay;
But my children and I—tho' we travel for years—
We never can reach it—it's so far away.

THE FLUFFETY HEN AND THE HOPPETY TOAD

The little old fluffety hen kept house
In a tiny white cottage beside the rough road,
And she had a neighbor, the funniest neighbor,
A queer little, fat little hoppety toad.

And they were so friendly, this fluffety hen,
And the little old hoppety, funny fat toad,
They went to each other so often to borrow
They made a smooth pathway across the rough road.

But this toad came SO often, and once when he puffed:
"O, my dearie, my dear, will you loan me an egg?
There's company coming, I need it for batter,
There's nothing to do but to borrow or beg."

The little old hen said, "Yes, certainly, dear,
You may have it and welcome, but please don't forget
You have already borrowed white meal for your porridge
And the sugar I loaned you, you haven't paid yet."

Then the toad got so angry, he puffed and he blew,
His complexion turned suddenly vividly red:
"All right, you'll be wanting to borrow my green
umbrella,
When it rains, and I'll not let you have it," he
said.

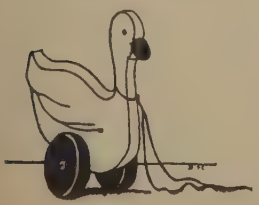
And the little old fluffety hen was so hurt,
She tried, and she tried, not a word could she
speak,
So she snuffled and sniffled and took up her apron
To wipe off a shiny round tear from her beak.

The toad thumbed his nose, and he stuck out his
tongue,
What a shame! and he left her, the poor little
hen!
O, the long road keeps winding forever and ever,
But the two of them never have crossed it since
then.

THE WOODEN DUCK

THE wooden duck sat in a Woolworth store
Looking as sad as a duck could look,
For nobody bought him—they passed him by
For a game or a gun or a ball or a book.

The elephant went, and the kangaroo,
The camel next, and the dog, and the goat,
And the duck was left
with tears in his eyes,
And a great big lump
in his wobbly throat.



And nobody bought him, and nobody would,
Why, even the clerk had tumbled him back
And had set up an engine and cars that ran
Like a little scared kitten around a track.

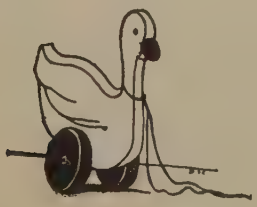
But once a man with the jolliest face,
And a stomach—well, possibly it WAS fat.
Stepped to the counter and said: "Let's see
The duck in the corner, I'll take that."

And the duck was quivering with delight,
(As much as a wooden duck could be),
"At least," he thought, "I am bought at last,
And it seems that somebody wanted me."

And they jiggled along, and they joggled along,
For a fat man jiggles and joggles so much,
But the wooden duck rode all safe and sound
In a pocket as warm as a rabbit's hutch.

Till they came to a stop, and at last the duck
Could peek from the pocket and see a bed,
And a getting-well boy with a pillow beneath
His propped-up, towsley, shiny head.

Then the little hands reached for the wrinkly
sack,
And they grabbed the duck, and they grabbed the
dad,
And never, and never a wooden duck
Had a happier home than this duck had.



CHARLEY MARKEE

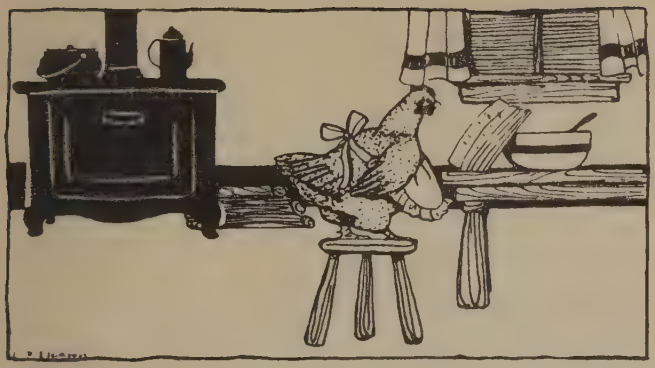
Charlie Markee had crookedy legs,
He walked with a cane and a crutch,
But he was so brave that he never would let
His crooked legs bother him much.

He lived in the shabbiest part of the town,
In a shanty that sagged in the back.
He picked up the coal in the railroad yards,
And carried it home in a sack.

But Charlie was rich, for he owned a big dog,
That was gentle and patient and wise.
He had shaggley hair and a waggley tail,
And the wistfulest, boy-loving eyes.

Once out in the dump Charley found some old straps,
And he made a dog harness for fun,
Then he built him a wagon from lumber he found
With axles and wheels that would run.

Then Charley Markee with his crookedy legs
Got in and he rode up and down,
And he was the envy, and he was the pride
Of every small boy in the town.



UNINVITED COMPANY

THE little hen's kitchen is neat as a pin,
She'd swept it, she'd scrubbed it, she'd brought
the wood in.
She'd blackened the stove, it was shiny and
bright;
Her frilly white apron stood out stiff and white;
And then she took down her new cook book to see
Just how to make caraway cake for her tea.

She stirred in the butter and sugar and eggs,
She beat and she whipped till she jiggled her legs;
She added the flour and milk, then together
She stirred them and beat till she wiggled each
feather.
Then into the oven she popped her bright pan,
And no one can bake better cake than she can.

She spread a white cloth on a table that shone—
"This one time," she said, "I'll be dining alone,
And I'm glad, for I wonder how long it has been
Since I haven't fed some of my kith or my kin!
Now I'll take all the time that I need, and I'll chew
As old doctor Rooster has told me to do."

But alas, for the plans of mice—or a hen!
She looked out and what do you think she saw then!
Why, her flippety cousin with all of her chicks
Came strutting along up the garden walk bricks.
"Hello," she called out. "We knew you would be
Offended if we didn't stop in for tea."
Now I ask you—what could any little hen do
But say, "Come in, cousin, I'm glad to see you."

LITTLE GRANDMOTHER

DEAR little grandmother, long ago,
Sitting straight in your high-backed chair,
Threading your glistening needle to sew
Your sampler with such earnest care—
I wonder, wouldn't you rather have run
Out in the rain and wind and sun?

Dear little grandmother, stitching true,
Figures and letters and trees and birds,
Crossing your threads of scarlet and blue,
Purple and gold as you shaped the words:
"Ellen Lee Endicott, age—nine years,"
And there is a stain—can it be tears!

Did you prick your fingers, and tangle your thread,
Dear little grandmother, grave and sweet!
The sun is gold on your shining head,
Demurely you cross your slippered feet.
O, dear little, quaint little Ellen Lee,
I wish you could look up and speak to me!

THE LITTLE PIG

THE little pig said to his mother one day:
"I am tired of snooping around this old sty,
I want to go out where the world is gay,
And make my fortune and sell and buy!"

"Well, dear," said his mother, "perhaps, 'twould
be best,
There are so many mouths here that have to be
fed,
If you are away there'll be more for the rest,
You may start out tomorrow, but now go to bed."

So early next morning he packed all his clothes,
He made a fat bundle to swing on his back.
He felt very sad—he looked down at his nose
Where two tears were sliding—alas and a-lack!

His poor busy mother heaved many a sigh
As she packed his lunch basket and gave him advice.
It was time to be going—but somehow the sty
Looked suddenly homelike and cozy and NICE.

His brothers and sisters all crowded about.
If he hadn't felt lonely he would have felt BIG;
But the tears kept on trickling off of his snout,
He was just a disconsolate, scared little pig.

Said his mother, "My dear, if you're feeling like that,
Unpack your big bundle, and eat up your lunch."
And the little pig DID, and he hung up his hat,
And scampered away with the rest of the bunch.

THE GYPSY CAMP

THE gypsies are camping in Duffey's woods,
And we children run to the pasture bars
To watch their fire and see the sparks
Float up and up till they reach the stars.

Their horses are tied to the wagon wheels,
The fire is red on a dark man's face;
A woman is stirring a pot of stew,
Her dress is velvet, her shawl is lace.

The gypsy children are playing games,
With straws and a string and a stick or two.
What are they playing? we wonder so—
And what are their names? we wish we knew.

Gypsies are queer—we are half afraid—
But we stay and we watch till the last red spark
Floats to the stars—and we keep so still
They never have known we are here in the dark.

THE LIGHT

THERE is such a shining thing
In my heart the whole year long:
It is like a flying wing,
It is like a lifted song,
It is like the silver sound
Of a sudden, quick-struck gong.

I think God has put a light
In my heart and makes it glow
Like a lamp turned high at night,
And He always makes me know
That it never will blow out—
Just because He loves me so.

BERRIES

I KNOW a meadow where strawberries grow
Bright-red and deliciously sweet,
And I know a woodlot where children may find
Wild dew berries ripe at their feet.

And raspberries grow in old gardens in June,
For lamp-lighted suppers at night,
And barberries flaming down small leafy lanes
Are the New England children's delight.

Big blackberries ripen on sunny high hills,
There are marshes where cranberries grow,
And I know an orchard where bushes are thick,
And clustering red currants glow.

And I know a garden where gooseberries hang
Clear-green in the yellow sunshine,
And where there are blue berries dewy and sweet,
And mulberries purple as wine.

Then O, in the winter, the loveliest things
Flame scarlet against the gray sky:
High sprays of red berries on old barren boughs,
With crimson-tipped wings flashing by.

There are clusters of berries on green cedar trees
That are frosted and spicy and blue,
And the clear china berries are gay amber beads
When the late golden sunlight shines through.

The mistletoe berries are creamy like pearls,
The holly, like rubies, are red,
Their glistening wax-leaves are all brightly green
When the leaves on the great oak are dead.

O, the round world is filled with such beautiful
things,
Through the summer, the spring, and the fall,
But the bright colored berries of all the year
through
Are the loveliest things of them all.

RIPE CHERRIES

In the orchard there are trees
Where ripe cherries dangle,
Bright and red and round—and each
Wears a silver spangle:
Rubies hanging from a stem,
And the sun makes stars on them.

I wish every child could come
From the noisy city,
Who has never, never seen
Cherries—what a pity!
I would like to watch their lips
Pursed for the first crimson sips.

I wish children all could climb
Up a leaning ladder,
There is nothing that I know
That could make them gladder,
Than to climb—and not to fall—
And pick cherries—stars and all.

CHRISTMAS TIME

Not now in quiet Bethlehem
We seek the Saviour King,
But always in small children's hearts
We find Him lingering.

Not now from far off Eastern skies
There flames one heavenly light—
But hark! a million dear home stars
Sing out his name tonight.

ROPE SKIPPING

EVERY girl has got a rope
Bright with painted handles,
Listen to the clatter of
The slippers and the sandals.

Sara Lee must surely be
The quickest, fastest stepper.
You can scarcely see the rope
When she's jumping "pepper."

Janet jumped a hundred times,
Now Roseann is trying:
Ninety eight, and ninety nine,
Missed—and she is crying!

Girls and ropes and golden sun
Mingled all together—
Skipping rope time always comes
In this kind of weather.

AS A LITTLE CHILD

CHRISTMAS is a child's day,
(O, my heart keep young).
Christmas is the loveliest
Song a child has sung.

Christmas is the starriest
Night of joy and mirth.
Every little child is glad
That Jesus came to earth.

Christmas is a child's day,
Watch a child's eyes shine!
(Heavenly Father, let me keep
The Christmas light in mine).

Christmas is so holy,
Pure and clean and white—
(Heavenly Father, let me be
A little child tonight).

MAY DAY

MAY DAY, May Day, and all the earth a song.
May Day, May Day, down leafy lane and long;
The morning is a pink rose, a whistling bird is
noon,
A wild white lily is the night beneath a sickle
moon.

May Day, May Day, and I a girl once more:
Berry-lipped and starry-eyed, in pink-sprigged
pinafore.
My heart a flutter of bright wings—my feet like
thistle down,
My basket heaped with hawthorn bloom to carry
to the town.

May Day, May Day, O, little light-heart girl,
The hedge rows gleam with amethysts, each leaf
tip is a pearl,
The spider webs are silver silk, the sun—a cloth
of gold,
The earth a shining jewel box for your small hands
to hold.

May Day, May Day, O, keep the cloth of gold,
And keep the shining silver silk to wear when you
are old.
Dear little girl, your basket heaped with beauties
of the dawn—
Hold closely each white hawthorn spray to love
when spring is gone.

OUR HIRED MAN

I LIKE to go with our hired man
When he lights the lantern at milking time.
We walk to the barn and he spreads the straw
For the horses' beds, and then we climb
Up into the mow—and pitch down hay
Enough for the horses and cows next day.

The barn is dark, but the lantern makes
A circle of light, and I hear the champ
Of the cows as they chew, and swallow, and chew,
The horses nicker, and munch, and stamp.
The hired man says, "So Boss," and he
Begins to milk and he talks with me.

Our hired man knows nearly everything.
I guess he has been 'most everywhere—
Anyway to St. Paul, and he
Saw Lindbergh once when he was there.
I'll bet our hired man could fly
Better'n Lindbergh if he'd try.

He talks and milks—he talks and milks—
The pail gets full—the foam slips up
Clear over the top, and our hired man
Pours out some milk in my little cup.
Then he strains the rest in a big tall can—
"Now run to the house," says the hired man.

IT IS RAINING OVER THE HILLS

It is raining over the hills today,
Bands of sunlight, and strands of gray,
And each little crevice and rill gives up
A tumbling store to the valley's cup
That spills itself on its laughing way
Out from the rain on the hills today.

It is raining over the hills today
Tenderly, sweetly, slantingly gay,
And the earth incenses lift and rise
As a violet breath to the breathing skies,
And the little lambs frisk in a lamb's own way,
Out in the rain on the hills today.

It is raining over the hills today,
A rain-bowed mist, and a dash of spray,
The wild flower petals laugh down on the grass,
The birds tweak wings as they homing pass,
Why, this is only a bit of play,
This rain that is over the hills today.

ROSEMARY RUNS AWAY

ROSEMARY wanted to see the world
All on a summer day—
She left her father, she left her mother,
Rosemary ran away.

Rosemary ran as far as the gate,
She ran a mile down the road,
She met a man with a hobbly horse,
And a ploppy, warty toad.

She met an old woman picking up sticks,
She met a boy with a gun,
Rosemary looked at the world and thought
That running away was fun.

Rosemary felt a splash on her nose,
Then one where her arm was bared;
The lightning flashed and the thunder roared!
Poor Rosemary was SO scared!

She turned and she ran, and she tripped and she
fell,
Got up and she ran once more,
She didn't stop running until she reached
Her own dear mother's door.

Her little red hat was a sight to see,
Her face was streaked with dirt,
Her dress was drabbled, her hair was wet,
And her skinned shins hurt and hurt!

But never a word her mother said,
And she hasn't until this day.
She acted as if she did not know
That Rosemary ran away.

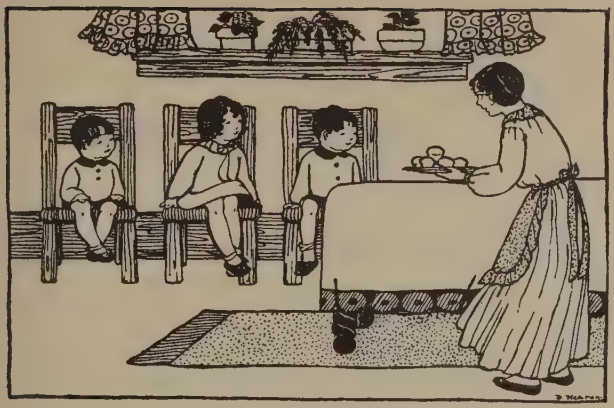
THE LITTLE LEAFY LANE

TODAY I went a-singing
Down the little leafy lane,
The morning was so fresh and fair
And sweet from last night's rain;
The grass was sprigged with blue and pink,
And splashed with berry stain.
(My prettiest dress is like the grass:
Flower sprigged and berry-stained).

The morning was a-laughing
Like children at their play.
The wind shook all the little trees,
And wet me with their spray;

Then turned and kicked their heels and said:
"I must be on my way."
(I wonder just how far the wind
Can travel in a day.)

The lane was all a-flutter
Like a bird upon a tree;
The lane was like the silver bell
That calls me in to tea.
(Surely God loves me much to give
Such lovely things to me!)



TEA TIME

When mother spreads the table
At evening time for tea
It is the very nicest time
In all the world to me.

I love it when the shadows
Grow long across the lawn.
Then mother folds her work away
And puts an apron on.

She goes out to the kitchen,
And turns the faucets there.
She puts the kettle on the fire,
And spreads the cloth with care.

I love to watch her placing
Each shining plate just so,
And see her place the silver down
Beside them in a row.

She bakes white fluffy biscuits;
She cuts the pink ham thin;
She tumbles jelly from a glass
And brings it quivering in.

Then when our family gathers
At six o'clock for tea—
Home is the very nicest place
In all the world to me.

NUTTING TIME

THE woods are all a-light with fire,
The leaves are like a flame,
The wind—a silver voice that calls
Each child by his own name:

"Come on," it says, "the nuts are ripe.
They're rattling on the ground,
They're settling down among the leaves
Just waiting to be found."

And every child who hears that call
Will answer—and will go,
Brown nuts will rattle like the rain,
The silver winds will blow;

The squirrels will chatter in the trees,
With gossipy delight;
The baskets and the shining pails
Will all be filled by night.

THE MOTHER MOUSE

A LITTLE gray, beady-eyed mother mouse
Decided to venture about the house
To see if she couldn't find something nice
To feed her little complaining mice.
She wrapped a kerchief about her head,
"The drafts are dreadfully bad," she said.
She carried a basket under her shawl,
And went a-scampering down the hall.
Under the door she flattened and slipped;
Along the wall in the dark she tipped,
Then all of a sudden her heart stood still,
For there was the cat on the window sill!
But her bed room slippers were soft, you see,
And even the cat couldn't hear when she
Slipped to the pantry, and stopped to taste
A cracker spread with a curious paste.
She nibbled awhile—and spat it out,
She wiggled the whiskers about her snout,
Then nibbled again—and shook her head:
"Well, this is no food for a mouse," she said.
She peeked and saw that the old cat slept,
Then she ran to the box where the cake was kept.
She filled her basket with frosting-ice,
Then turned to go back to her little mice.

But O, for gracious, for mercy sake,
She had a MONSTER-OUS stomach ache!
She scarcely could amble along at all
Down the old dark, desolate, dreary hall.
But at last she was home—and she staggered back
To the shelf where she kept the ipecac.
She tipped up the bottle, and swallowed—and then
She was suddenly better—then WELL again!
She unpinned the kerchief—she shook her head:
That cracker was certainly spoiled," she said.
"Now children, I'll hurry, for supper is late,"
And the little complaining mice had to wait.

THE PARTY

Little girls are walking
Primly down the street,
Wearing bright, brief dresses,
Looking mighty sweet.

Now they're at the party,
Running—all of them,
Each a blowing poppy
On a slender stem.

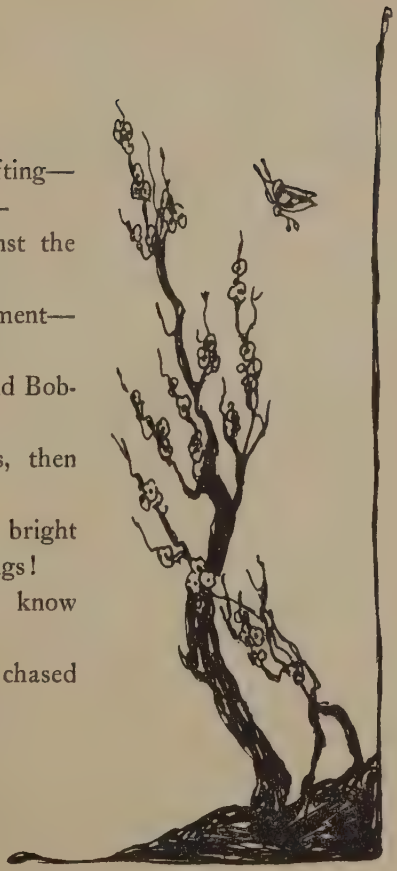
Now they're at the table,
Five pink candles glow,
Two sweet red lips pucker,
Watch them blow and blow.

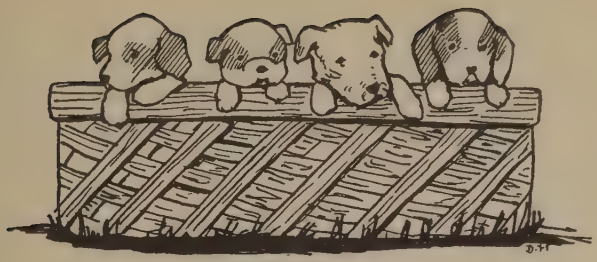
O, look what is coming,
Cake and pink ice cream!
A little girl's first party
Is lovely as a dream.

CATCHING BUTTERFLIES

Bobbie has a funnel net,
Guess what he is out to get?
Something yellow, blue and red,
Flying there above his head;
Something darting here and there,
Dipping, diving everywhere—
To the rose bush—there he goes,
Almost riding Bobbie's nose.
Bobbie's nearly caught him now—
No, he's on the apple bough,

There he's lifting—
sailing high—
Quivering against the
sky—
Hangs a moment—
then he dips
Down again, and Bob-
bie slips
On his tip-toes, then
he swings,
Catching two bright
fluttering wings!
I suppose you know
now what
Little Bobbie chased
and caught?





PUPS

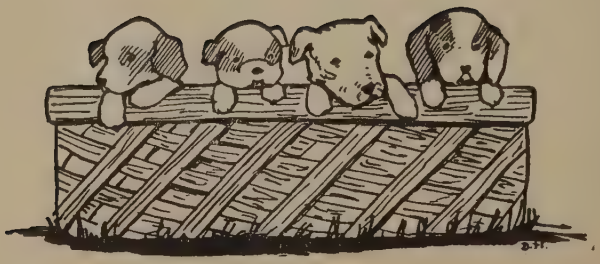
If you can see a puppy dog
And not want to take it
And tumble it and squeeze it
Until you bend or break it—
Listen, what I say is true—
There is something wrong with you.

A tiny bull pup, shiny, sleek,
Round as any apple,
Not a wrinkle in his hide,
Brown or white or dapple,
Unless you rumple him, you know.
Then the slippery wrinkles show.

And a fluffy woolly pup,
Bead eyes bright and blinking,
Frowning at you from the haze
Of his much wise thinking:
Like some old professor looks
When he cons great heavy books.

Little wire airedale pup
Standing at attention,
Not a feature beautiful
That anyone can mention,
Yet there is no greater joy
For a freckled, pant-patched boy.

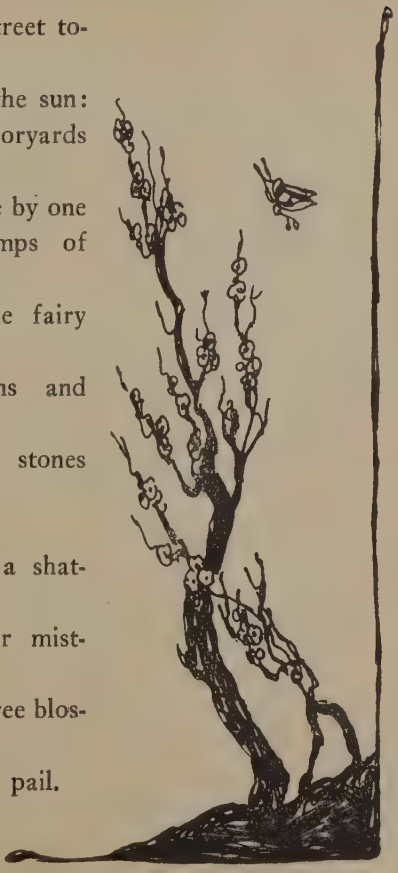
Thoroughbred or spotted cur
White or black or yellow—
Every pup can find the heart
Of some little fellow.
Unless you love them as boys do—
There is something wrong with you.



SPRING MORNING ON AN UGLY STREET

I saw an ugly street today
Grow lovely in the sun:
The barren dooryards suddenly
Were lighted one by one
With little clumps of emerald grass
That burned like fairy fires
Among tin cans and broken glass
And sticks and stones and wires.

An old elm by a shattered curb
Had donned her mist-green veil;
A ragged plum tree blossomed white
Above a garbage pail.



One small hurt child forgot to weep—
He gazed in strange surprise
At the strange magic—all the world's
Wide wonder in his eyes.
A few small things—a flowering bough,
A bit of new green sod—
But O, the ugly street was glad
For these bright gifts from God!

ROSEMARY

Rosemary, Rosemary,
isn't afraid,
Out in the barnyard
alone,
If a little red squeally
pig nips at her heels
She tosses a jaggedy
stone.

And the little red squeally
pig grunts and he runs,
And if the old dog barks
"Bow-Wow,"
She stamps her small foot, and he turns and runs
back—
She's not even afraid of a cow!

Rosemary, Rosemary, always is BRAVE,
Except—O, except when she sees
The geese and the old gander waddling out
From under the mulberry trees.

O, what shall she do
then—O, what shall
she do!
They're coming! They're
hissing! Dear me!
She flies to the gate
calling out as she
runs:
"Don't let them old
gooses get me!"

THE GANDER

The old gray gander thinks he is
Smarter than the others,
Than the turkey gobbler or
His sisters or his brothers.

Watch him waddle down the walk—
Captain and commander!
No one thinks he is as smart
As this proud old gander.

Yet I heard the hired man
Say the other morning:
"Jim will make a platterful!"
Shall I give him warning?

FISHING

CLEAR clean water and blue, blue sky,
And wind with a silver gleam—
The thin green leaves of a willow tree
Bending above a stream.

A barefoot boy, and a bamboo pole,
A wiggley worm on a hook,
A wobbley cork—a flash in the air—
And look what he caught—O, LOOK!

A shining thing on a grassy bank
That flops and flips and flops;
Another wiggley worm on a hook—
A startled green frog plops!

O, the lure of the silver wind, the sun,
Of water bound for the sea—
How I wish I might fish with that boy,
And that he would fish with me!

SICK A-BED

WHENEVER any of us are
Sick and have to stay in bed
With a snuffy, sneezy cold,
Or a thumpy, achey head,
Mother always tries to see
Just how cozy we can be.

She brings out the brightest quilt,
And the thinnest, bluest cup,
And then makes the medicine
Seem just fun to gobble up,
And she puffs our pillows fat;
Smooths our sheets, and we like that!

Mother makes the bed stand so
All the sunlight will shine there.
When she sits by us and reads
Sometimes it lights up her hair,
And her face—until she seems
Like the angels in our dreams.

THE OLD OIL PORTRAITS

THEY always watch me, watch me, as I play:
The old oil portraits on our parlor wall.
(Great grandfather and grandmother are they.)
Sometimes behind the big clock in the hall
I peer out at them just to see
If maybe they have lost me there—but no,
I see their eyes turned hallward and to me.
They watch me, watch me everywhere I go.
I even hide behind the tallest chair,
And when I peep out they are watching me.
And all the time they know that I am there,
However do they turn their eyes to see?

Grandfather wears the queerest big black bow
Beneath his chin. Grandmother's cap and tie
Are funny frilly things. I'd like to know
Will my dress look so queerly by and by?
I wish they might step down from those great frames.
There are so many things I want to know.
I'd ask them how the children played their games,
And how they learned their lessons long ago.
Sometimes I think they quite approve of me:
Their eyes tell me that I am being good,
But there are times when I can plainly see
They'd scold their great-granddaughter if they could.

BUBBLES

SLIM-STEMMED pipes and a beaded bowl,
And the scarlet lips of children blowing,
And into the air—and into the air,
The whirling bubbles going:

Lighter than down from a thistle bloom,
Light as a falling feather,
Lighter than anything anywhere
The bubbles rise together,

And break with the tiniest shaft of sun
Or a mote on a sunbeam drifting,
But one—like colored cathedral glass
Is lifting—lifting—lifting—

Holding a moment a child's red heart
The shine of his eyes deep wonder,
Holding the colors of heaven and earth
Before it bursts asunder.

And caught on the air where its glory was
There trembles a sudden wailing,
That tangles with laughter before the pipes
Set another bubble sailing.

THE CANARY

Such a narrow little life
Our canary leads
With his cuttle-bone and perch,
Lettuce leaf and seeds,
Yet he hops and he swings,
And he sings and sings and sings.

And his little golden cage
Never has known gloom,
And his little golden songs
Fill and light the room,
And he never questions why
He has wings and cannot fly.

Singing out his golden songs
Gladly one by one,
While beyond the window pane
There are trees and sky and sun—
And beyond all cages' bars
There are stars and stars and stars.

MUD PIES

PATTIES baking in the sun,
Small hands black and gritty,
Dresses dirty, blouses soiled,
Dear me, what a pity!

But such happy, happy hearts
Underneath them beating!
Maybe mud pies aren't quite
The best pies to be eating.

But up through the finger-tips
Of each little fellow
There is sunshine being drawn
Warm and bright and yellow.

See how brown the faces are
Bent above their baking,
Mud pies are the nicest pies
Children could be making.

SHOOTING STARS

I THINK the lovely shooting stars
Are Heaven's fireflies:
They dart across the heavenly grass
And light our summer skies.

I wonder if the children there
Run as we do each night
And catch the fireflies in their hands
To see what makes the light?

BLOCKS

Pudgy little Peterkin
In his rolled down socks,
Sprawls upon the nursery floor
Playing with his blocks.

Pudgy little Peterkin
Builds his castles TALL,
Then they teeter in the air.
Topple down and fall.

Pudgy little Peterkin
Built this one SO HIGH—
Planned to make it reach the roof—
Then to reach the sky.

Tipple, topple—there it goes.
Scatters far and wide!
None of us could blame a boy—
Could we—if he cried?

NEW BABIES

WIGGLEY-WAGGLEY babies are
The nicest things I think,
Good enough to gobble up,
Sweet enough to drink:

Babies with wet-poppy mouths,
Eyes like larkspur bloom
Any sizzly-sozzly one
Lights the darkest room.

From a blanket's woolly depth
A baby peering out,
Wrinkling his nose to see
What the world's about—

Even when he squawky-squawks,
Purple as a beet,
Rubs his nose and kicks his heels,
A baby's mighty sweet.

Kicky-kick, and stretchy-stretch—
That's the way to grow!
Babies are the sweetest things
In the world, I know.

FIRE FLIES

THE fire flies are flashing
Across the lawn tonight,
The fairies are out riding,
Their headlights shining bright.

They drive their automobiles,
They start—and watch them stop!
They never crash together,
Nor need a traffic cop.

JEALOUS

A MONSTER is gnawing at Bobbie's heart,
He crawled right in and pulled down the lid.
If it isn't a monster, at least it is
A cabbage worm or a katy-did,
Well anyway SOMETHING GREEN, for he
Is as jealous—as jealous as jealous can be.

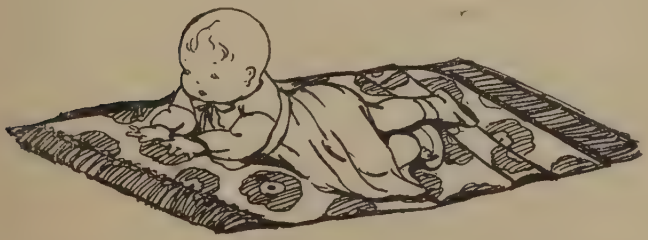
For snuggled close to his mother's breast
Is a fuzzy head and a small red face,
And hasn't it taken his Mother's arms?
And hasn't it taken poor Bobbie's place?
Why, it has even taken his BED,
And his PILLOW for its small fuzzy head!

And nobody notices Bobbie much,
Since the little red wiggley baby came,
And nobody has a moment to tell
A story at all, or to play a game!
I ask you this—now wouldn't you be
As jealous as Bobbie, if you were he?

WALKING ALONE

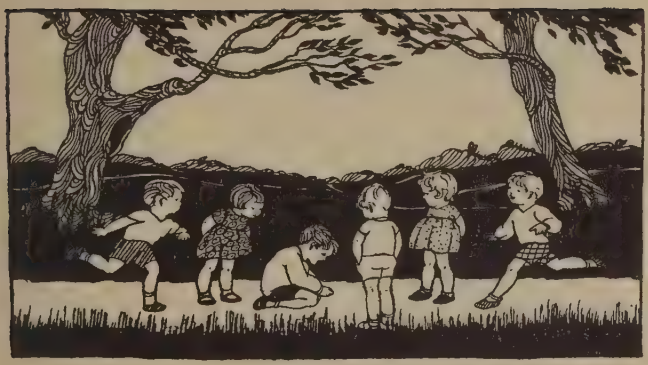
TEETERY, tottery, there he goes
Trying to walk to mother,
Wibbly, wobbly on his toes—
Be careful, little brother!

Even a wrinkly rug can make
A tumbly-bug out of him.
Bless him! all of us watch him take
His first steps. How we love him!



LITTLE COUNTRY COUSINS

Beverly, Betty, and dear little Dean,
And Wayne, and Lois, and small Lorene,
Are cousins who live so close together
They play—no matter how bad the weather:
In the barn, if it's wet, in the yard if there's sun,
Or out in the meadow—and O, they have fun!
They tumble in straw that is yellow as gold;
They gather the eggs—all a basket will hold;
And out in the orchard are apples and berries,
And ripe in the cherry trees there, are the cherries.
There are nuzzly pigs, there are sheep in the hollow,
And cows that the shepherd dog surely will follow.
There is hay in the mow where they tumble and tumble;
There are bees in the clover that bumble and bumble;
There's a swing between trees—there are fences to climb,
The dear little cousins have such a good time!



MARBLES

For a long time I have wanted to know—
And some boy tell me, pray—
Is there a secret sign that tells
When it is MARBLE DAY?

Is it a certain way the sun
Shines on the school house wall!
Is it the way the South wind blows,
Or when the blackbirds call?

All boys know it, for suddenly
Where marbles were not before,
Pockets are bulging and I slip
Upon them on the floor.

Marbles, marbles, everywhere.
Every boy in the town
Calling each other as they run
And circle, and kneel down—

To shoot at the colored globes of glass,
Of agate and of clay.
Someone tell me—what makes them choose
This day as MARBLE DAY?

THE DARK

WHAT do children think about
When they go to bed?
Once a naughty boy I knew
Covered up his head,
And he didn't say his prayers,
He was scared instead!

And another boy I knew
Wasn't scared a bit,
He went up the stairs alone
And the lamp not lit!
It was dark up there—but he
Looked straight into it.

And he saw a little star
Through the window lace,
And he thought it looked so kind—
Like a watching face;
Then he knelt and prayed—and knew
God is every place.

NIGHT TIME

The little white sheep go over the hill,
All in a funny row—
Dear little boy blue, lie still, lie still,
And watch where the pretty sheep go.

The little white stars come out in the sky—
Watch them, my pretty Bo Peep.
But although they both of them try and try
They cannot keep watch—they're asleep.

A Book of Children's Verse

"Miss Humpety Comes to Tea"

and Other Poems by

Grace Noll Crowell

Author of "White Fire
and
"Silver in the Sun"